

OPEN LETTERS.

THE NAMES OF OUR FERNS.

THE deadly parallel has always been a striking method of impressing a point. When its bald statements are unqualified it seems to mean more than the facts will warrant, and it is expected to kill at long range. In a recent issue of the *BOTANICAL GAZETTE*, Mr. Fernald has made use of it to show the supposed instability of the "reform movement," but does not note the fact that ten of the fifteen changes of which he accuses me were made in accordance with changed conceptions regarding the limitations of genera, and consequently have no bearing whatever on the point he is attempting to illustrate. His illustration in other respects is very happily chosen, and its full import will become apparent when we add the part he forgot to use. For the benefit of the younger generation of botanists who, like Mr. Fernald, might be misled to suppose that all the changes of plant names have been proposed by the "reform movement," I will add from the same group the changes of trans-Carline origin that have been made in the past generation as follows:

FERN NAMES USED IN GRAY'S MANUAL, FIRST EDITION.	FERN NAMES USED IN GRAY'S MANUAL, SIXTH EDITION.
Polypodium Phegopteris L. (2, 3, 4).*	Phegopteris polypodioides Fee.
Polypodium hexagonopterum Michx. (2, 3, 4).	Phegopteris hexagonoptera Fee.
Polypodium Dryopteris L. (2, 3, 4).	Phegopteris Dryopteris Fee.
Struthiopteris Germanica Willd. (2, 3, 4, 5).	Onoclea Struthiopteris Hoffm.
Allosorus gracilis Presl. (2, 3, 4).	Pellaea gracilis Hook.
Pteris atropurpurea L.†	Pellaea atropurpurea Link.
Scolopendrium officinarum Smith (2, 3, 4).	Scolopendrium vulgare Smith.
Dicksonia punctilobula Hook. (2, 3, 4, 5).	Dicksonia pilosiuscula Willd.
Dryopteris Thelypteris [A. Gray].	Aspidium Thelypteris Swartz.
Dryopteris Noveboracensis [A. Gray].	Aspidium Noveboracense Swartz.
Dryopteris intermedia [A. Gray].	Aspidium spinulosum intermedium D. C. Eaton.
Dryopteris dilatata [A. Gray].	Aspidium spinulosum dilatatum D. C. Eaton.
Dryopteris rigida [A. Gray].	Aspidium Boottii Tuckerm.
Dryopteris cristata [A. Gray].	Aspidium cristatum Swartz.
Dryopteris Goldiana [A. Gray].	Aspidium Goldianum Hook.
Polystichum aculeatum Roth.	Aspidium aculeatum Braunii Koch.
Polystichum acrostichoides Schott.	Aspidium acrostichoides Swartz.
Polystichum Lonchitis Roth.	Aspidium Lonchitis Swartz.
Osmunda spectabilis Willd. (2, 3, 4).	Osmunda regalis L.
Botrychium lunarioides Swartz (2, 3, 4, 5).	Botrychium ternatum Swartz.
Botrychium Virginicum Swartz (2, 3, 4, 5).	Botrychium Virginianum Swartz.

* These numbers indicate the successive editions in which this same form appeared.

† This passed through the intermediate stage of *Allosorus atropurpureus* [A. Gray] before reaching its final form.

Or in other words, out of the fifty species of ferns from the northeastern states described in the first edition of Gray's *Manual*, 21, or 42 per cent., bore different names in the last issue of the same work, and more than that, eight of these suffered a change in the specific name also, not including those whose relative rank was changed from variety to species or *vice versa*. Surely the trans-Carlins will have to admit that this exceeds the 25 per cent. which Mr. Fernald cites as such a horrible example. But after all, what matters it if 99 per cent. are changed so long as the change is an evolution towards a more stable system based on principles less unseaworthy than the personal preference hit-or-miss system of Kew and Berlin?

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